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The Marvels of Nature

When a national census is taken, it is a fairly straightforward matter to count individuals, because they can be distinguished from each other on the basis of names, places of residence and information given by relatives. But when it comes to taking a census of tigers, how can they be counted when it is never known exactly where they are at any given moment? And then you can hardly go up to a tiger, ask him his name, and whether he has any brothers and sisters! So how is it to be done?

In 1970, this problem was solved, to a large extent, by the late Mr. Saroj Raj Chowdhury, wildlife expert and former field director of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve. He came up with a simple, but ingenious device, called the 'tiger-tracer' which enabled census-takers to record and examine tigers' pugmarks. It consisted of a rectangular clear glass plate, just 3 millimetres in thickness, 25 centimetres in length and 20 centimetres in breadth. It was easy to manipulate by means of wing nuts at each corner, and could be placed squarely over pugmarks. It was then an easy matter to trace the distinguishing features of the pugmarks on the glass with a fountain pen. No two tigers have exactly the same pugmarks, just as no two human beings have exactly the same finger prints. This has been confirmed by superimposing the tracings on glass of the pugmarks large numbers of identifiable tigers. It was by this method then that the national tiger census was carried out in 1984, taking footprints which had gone at least 0.5 cm. into fine loam as being the most representative. Records were kept by transferring the glass tracing to paper for greater performance. The second all-India summer census taken in 1979 revealed the presence of 173 tigers in Orissa's reserved forests, comprising 57 males 170 females and 16 cubs.

The 'tiger-tracer' also confirmed the swinging movement of the Great Cat's gait and the fact that it does not amble along like a camel. The two feet on the same side are never lifted simultaneously and the relative distance between the hind and front pugmarks indicate the speed at which the tiger moves.

Because the front paws bear the extra weight of the head, neck and shoulders, the latter being more heavily-built than the hind quarters, the forepaws are generally bigger and more squarish in both sexes, like the elephant's front feet which are larger and leave roundish prints. Because sexual dimorphism is more distinct in the hind paws, it is the hind pugmark which is considered the better distinguishing feature to put on record.

All men are on God's divine record

All God's creatures likewise have their distinguishing features, which are clearly recorded on Nature's list on living beings. By such phenomena the Creator knows every individual as a separate entity, and metes out his divine justice accordingly. This concept is stated thus in the Holy Quran:

“The unbelievers say, The Hour will never come to us. Say, Yes indeed, by my Lord, it shall come to you, by Him who knows all that is hidden. Not an atom in heaven or earth escapes Him, nor is there anything smaller or greater but is in a clear record. He will surely reward those who have faith and do good works (34: 3-5).

The information on the ‘tiger-tracer’ was taken from a report published in the *Times of India*, April 6, 1984.

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They were obsessed with thoughts of the next world

Hasan Basri saw many of the Companions of the Prophet. This is how he described them in a lecture to his contemporaries: "I met seventy of those who fought at Badr. They usually wore wool. If you were to see them, you would think they were mad. If they were to see the best of you, they would think that these people have nothing to do with religion. If they were to see the worst of you, they would say that these people have no faith in the Day of Judgement. I have seen people to whom the world has less meaning than the dust beneath their feet."

THE MESSAGE OF THE QURAN

Safa and Marwa are among the symbols of God. It shall be no offence for the pilgrim or the visitor to the Sacred House to walk around them. And one who does good of his own accord should know that God is Appreciative and Knowing. Those that hide the clear proofs and the guidance We have revealed after We have proclaimed them in the Book, shall be cursed by God and shall be cursed by coursors; except those that repent and mend their ways and make known the truth. Towards them I shall relent. I am the Relenting One, the Merciful. The infidels who die unbelievers shall incur the curse of God, the angels, and all people. Under it they shall remain forever; their punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they, be given respite (12: 158-162).

Abraham, may peace be upon him, was a native of Iraq. Acting under God's command, he took his wife Hajira and infant son Ishmael, leaving them in the place now known as Mecca. No one lived there then, and there was no water. Thirst forced Hajira to go out in search of water. Distressed, she ran up and down between the hills of Safa and Marwa. After seven unsuccessful journeys, she returned to their dwelling. There she found a spring, now known as the spring of Zamzam, flowing from the ground. This was a symbolic event, showing us how Almighty God treats His servants. If one presses on in service of God, eventually reaching a stage where 'there is nothing but burning sand beneath one's feet, then God in His mercy will cause a refreshing spring to gush forth from the dryness of the desert sands. When Muslims perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, they repeat Hajira's historic quest between these hills, thus commemorating the profound relevance of the event to everyone who struggles in the path of God.

God's signs were displayed so clearly in the Prophet Mohammad's words and actions, that it was not difficult to see that he was sent by God. Yet the Jewish intelligentsia denied him. They were prevented from believing by a feeling that if they accepted an Arab prophet, then their religious hegemony would come to an end. People would stop looking up to the Jews as their leaders. Old established religious traditions and the interests which come to be associated with them, (the Jews being the main beneficiaries) would be destroyed. They deemed it wise to conceal the truth, for they thought that they would lose their worldly status were they to accept it, but it would have been much wiser for them to have proclaimed it. They forgot that God's servants are required to put truth before their worldly interests. One who becomes destitute for the Lord's sake gains succour from the inexhaustible pastures of divine grace.

Still, the doors of God's mercy are always open to His servants. He will always forgive one who comes to his senses and mends his erring ways, proclaiming the truth as God wishes it to be proclaimed. Only those who persevere in their disbelief until death will be deprived of His mercy.

Your God is one God. There is no god but Him. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that sail the ocean with what is beneficial to man; in the water which God sends down from the sky and with which He revives the earth after its death, dispersing over it all manner of beasts; in the movement of the winds, and in the clouds that are driven between earth and sky: surely in these there are signs for people who understand (2: 163-164).

Mankind has only one God, and He is the only worthy focus of man's attention. Our very existence on earth, and all the benefits we derive from the world around us, are manifestations of His unbounded grace and mercy. In return, we should become God's devoted servants, living for Him, dying for Him, and setting all our hopes on winning His eternal favour. Man owes everything to God. If he becomes conscious of this, God will mean everything to him, as a mother means everything to her baby child.

To find our way to God, we have only to look at the universe – a magnificent display of His might spread out before us. A fathomless production-unit is at work; it too, must have been made by someone. All the various and contrasting species that exist in the world function together in absolute harmony; they must all have been created and must all be controlled by One Being, for otherwise they could not work together as one. Everything benefits the rest of the universe in some way; this shows that all things were designed according to a definite, conscious pattern. Apparently lifeless objects are invested with life and freshening by a natural process shows that death is simply temporary in this world. So it is always in this world: death is always followed by new life. Every manner of animate creative flourishes in the world, all sustained by one form of food and drink—yet another clue to God's fathomless power. The wind encompasses man, showing him how he is entirely in the hands of his Creator. How infinite God's mercy is: He has arranged everything in the universe to fit in with man's needs; He looks after a person's needs even before he is born into the world.

Signs such as these scattered throughout the universe are a grand display of the Creator; of His existence; of His oneness; of His being as assembly of all qualities of perfection. On such a vast scale does the universe make all these things plain that no one with vision should fail to see God; no one with intelligence should be unable to discover Him. But only those who give deep thought to God's signs can fathom them. One has to be sincere in one's search for truth in order to find it, able to rise above self-interest when forming one's opinions. This can only come from absorption, not in externals, but in a search for the inner reality that lies beneath the outward face of things.

Five Days

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was born in Allahabad on November 14, 1889, and received his higher education in England. Later in Indian politics, his was the highest position after that of Mahatma Gandhi. When India was set free in 1947, he was elected Prime Minister and held this position till the day of his death. The fame and popularity which he achieved in international as well as in Indian politics were quite extraordinary.

M.J. Akbar writes in a recently published Nehru's biography:

During the final stage of his life, he held a press conference in New Delhi, on May 22, 1964, in his capacity as Prime Minister. The conference was well-attended and many searching questions were put to him. The last question, however, was, as Nehru himself put it, a leading one, Referring to a recent television interview in which Nehru had said that he was not grooming his daughter as his successor, a correspondent asked whether it would not be preferable to settle the question in his lifetime. Reclining in his chair, a smiling Jawaharlal Nehru replied. 'My life is not going to end so soon. 'There were more than 300 journalists present. They thumped their desks and cheered. Jawaharlal went off to Dehra Dun for his last holiday after that press conference.¹

Just five days after he had made this statement, Jawaharlal Nehru died in New Delhi on May 27, 1964. At the very moment that Pandit Nehru, from the pinnacle of Prime Ministership, was announcing that his life was not going to end so soon", fate was decreeing the very opposite – that Nehru's life was going to end very soon. And subsequent events show how destiny's verdict prevailed over Nehru's optimism.

There are very few people in this world who do not subscribe to the same hopeful idea that life "is not going to end so soon." Almost everyone, consciously or unconsciously, thinks in the same way. Yet everyone stands at a point where death could very well be just five days away. Or even less. The fact that no one credits this is responsible for the widespread moral laxity and indifference to ethics which are so regrettably prevalent today. People simply do not feel that death is hanging over them, and do not, therefore, see the necessity of mending their ways.

If a man who was leading a life of ignorance and rebelliousness knew for certain that his life could not last beyond five days, he would surely seek enlightenment, eschew rebellion and focus his attention on the Almighty. Anyone who had become a leader through lies and deceit would immediately prefer to stand down from the public platform and retire from active life, if he knew that in just five days time, his falsehood would be laid bare in the divine court beyond the grave. Similarly a man who falsely gained possession of another's wealth, would immediately find his ill-gotten gains the most intolerable burden if he knew that in five days time, his guilt would be exposed, and that he would have to stand trial before his Maker.

1. M.J. Akbar, *Nehru: The Making, of India*, 1988, p. 581.

All of us are standing on the brink of the grave. But we all think we are a very safe distance away from it. This misconception is the greatest underlying factor in the corruption of today. If we could but rectify it, it would mean the saving of mankind from the most terrible divine retribution.

The Prophet besieged Taif for more than twenty days. When it became difficult for the Muslims to continue with the siege, he ordered them to withdraw. It was then suggested that the Prophet bring down a curse upon the heads of the Thaqeef tribe, but the Prophet merely raised both hands and prayed: "Lord, guide the Thaqeef, and bring them into the fold of Islam." The Prophet was likewise told of the contumacy and disbelief of the Daus tribe and again it was suggested that he should invoke a curse upon them, but the Prophet's response was again to pray. "Lord, guide the Daus," he begged, "and bring them into the fold of the faithful."

An Unsupported Argument

Although Abdullah ibn Ubayy had accepted Islam from the hand of the Prophet himself, and had prayed along with other Muslims, he still had the presumption to slander the Prophet and his family. Indeed, the Quran cites Abdullah ibn Ubayy as the main source of calumny against the Prophet (24:2). Yet, in spite of the Quran bearing witness to his misconduct, no punishment was meted out to him. On the contrary, he was allowed to go unpunished in view of the fact that he would, in any case, be judged by God on the Day of judgement. And so he continued to live amongst other Muslims, till he met a natural death.

It is related in the traditions of the Prophet that on one occasion, Umar Farooq asked the Prophet's permission to decapitate this hypocrite, Abdullah ibn Ubayy. But the Prophet restrained him, saying "Leave him. Let it not be said that Muhammad executes his own men."¹ Another tradition has it that the Prophet added, "we will give him better and kinder treatment as long as he live with us."²

We thus learn from the Prophet's example that there can be times when a man guilty of the worst form of character assassination is not punishable by death sentence. All the Prophet did – although he was the ruler of Medina – was make Abdullah's wrong doing public.

It must be conceded then that when Muslims clamour for the death penalty in cases of acts of insolence against the Prophet, they are taking a stand which is in no way supported either by the Quran or by the Hadith.

1 Ibn Kathir, *Tafseer*, vol. IV, p. 70.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

The World of Here and Now and the Hereafter

A shopkeeper once remarked that he opened his shop every day, although it cost him a hundred rupees a day to do so. There were the employee's wages to pay the electricity bill to foot and a whole array of other miscellaneous expenses. Then why open his shop at all? It was because he knew for sure that by spending a hundred rupees a day, he was going to earn one thousand rupees in return.

This is a typical human attitude. A man will divide his time and energy to any given pursuit only so long as he is convinced that he is going to receive more from his activities than he expends on them. If people were over to lose this conviction, much of our moral human activity would come to a standstill.

It is also a regular feature of human existence that people exert themselves far more in matters of this world than they do in the spiritual affairs of the Hereafter. What is the reason for this? It is because the result of worldly investment is immediately obvious. When one invests in matters of this world one feels certain that by spending 'One hundred' one will receive 'one thousand' in return. But in matters of the Hereafter, the result is not instantly forthcoming. One is never sure, therefore, that what one expends is going to be returned with interest. While the act of 'spending' in this world is synonymous with 'investment', the act of spending in the cause of the Hereafter very often seems no better than the squandering of wealth.

But we should never forget that while the full 'return' on one expenditure will be received in the Hereafter, a part of it is nevertheless available to us right here in this world.

This worldly return is of a psychological nature. That is to say that this 'return' comes to man in the form of thankfulness, contentment and trust. In being imbued with these states of mind, he experiences superior spiritual feelings. In giving to others, he receives from God. Through monetary donation he receives spiritual wealth. When he suffers losses, he is given the taste of discovery. In short, the Hereafter which he will meet on a physical plane tomorrow, will come to him today on a purely sensory plane.

Unawareness

When Mohammad, May peace be upon him, announced his prophethood in Mecca, the first person to declare his belief in it was his ten-year-old cousin, Ali ibn Abu Talib. At that time the environment in Mecca was so hostile that even prayers had to be performed in hiding. The Prophet would, therefore, set off for the mountains along with Ali so that none should see them pray. One day, while he was saying his prayer with Ali in the mountains, the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, came upon them. The form their prayer took seemed strange to him, so he asked "My cousin, what is this religion you have adopted?"

The Prophet then explained to his uncle that God had chosen him as His Prophet and that He had revealed to him the form of worship which best pleased Him. Then the Prophet requested his uncle to accept the same religion. Abu Talib replied, "O my cousin, it is not possible for me to renounce the religion of my forefathers."

Another tradition has it that when Abu Talib saw Ali saying his prayers and enquired what religion he followed, Ali replied, "O my father, I have believed in Allah and His messenger and testify to the truth he brings." In answer to this, his father said, "The Prophet has not called upon you to do anything other than good. Adhere to it."*

Just following the religion of his forefather did not require Abu Talib to make any new decisions. But to believe in a contemporary Prophet meant that he would have to discover the truth anew. There is no doubt that in this world the former task is the easier and the latter very hard indeed. Abu Talib was just one more individual who lived in the time of the Prophet. But in terms of his character, he is typical of all ages. The Abu Talibs of this world are to be found everywhere, in one guise or another.

* Ibn Hisham, *Seerah*, vol. I. p. 225.

The Divine System No rose without a thorn

*"The dogs keep barking,
but the elephant goes on its way"*

If, in plucking a beautiful rose, a man pricks himself so badly on its thorns that his hands start bleeding, should he blame the rose bush? Would it be right to do so? Anyone with even an ounce of sense would know that it is pointless to complain about the thorns, because nature has decreed that every rose bush shall have its share of them. Hence the saying, 'No rose without a thorn'. So, since there is simply no way of getting rid of thorns, if a man plucks roses, he should take good care to avoid the thorns, rather than tear his skin on them and then start blaming the rose bush.

Things are as they are because the system of life was made by God. And God had His own reasons for having thorn as well as flowers. This holds true of human life also, for wherever there are good people, there will also be bad. Along with the angels, we have to accept that there will always be the Satans.

This system of creation can only remain harmonious if people do not become hostile to each other, if one group refrains from plotting against another and if no one feels he has the right to be aggressive. How is this to be achieved? The solution, according to the Quran, lies in patience and avoidance. That is to say, man should steer clear of manmade thorns. And if, in spite of having taken all precautions, he still manages to prick himself, he should regard this as a mere accident, and continue to follow the path of patience and forbearance, rather than pursue an all-out collision-course.

There is a saying that runs, "The dogs keep barking, but the elephant goes on its way, "How different from a dog barking at another dog. An almost certain result of that would be a dog fight. When the dog barks at the elephant, however, the latter does not turn his head. We should always remember the elephant, even in the face of the most severe provocation.

Woman in Society

In almost every inhabited corner of the globe, the societies of ancient times regarded the status of women as being inferior to that of man. "In Athens," says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "woman's status had degenerated to that of slaves. Wives were secluded in their homes, had no education and few rights, and were considered by their husbands no better than chattels.In ancient Rome, a woman's legal position was one of complete subordination, first to the power of her father or brother and later to that of her husband, who held paternal power over his wife. In the eyes of the law, women were regarded as imbeciles."¹

The reason for the ill-treatment of women in ancient times was the prevalence of superstition. There were, in fact, very few matters upon which irrational beliefs of one sort or another had not been adopted. Such perverted thinking became elevated to the status of religion and, as such, had pervasively baneful influence upon all human relations.

Speculation was another mode of thought which produced strange, and often pernicious results. Ridiculing the thought processes of the ancient Greeks, Bertrand Russell writes, "Aristotle maintained that women have fewer teeth than men; although he was twice married, it never occurred to him to verify this statement by examining his wives' mouths."²

Christianity did little to improve this situation, having given great importance, in the very first book of the Bible, to the erroneous belief that it had been Eve's wrongdoing which had caused Adam's ejection from the garden of Eden. Referring to women in general in this context, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says, "(According to Christianity) they were regarded as temptresses, responsible for the fall of Adam, and as second class human beings."³ With such a myth ever-present in the collective consciousness of society, it is little wonder that women were allotted an inferior position in both religious and secular matters. In the first letter addressed to the Corinthians, St. Paul says, "For the man is not of the woman but the woman is of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."⁴ In this, St. Paul is simply reaffirming what is laid down as gospel truth in the Old Testament Book of Genesis.

Women's Status in Islam

In ancient times, thanks to the unreasoning and unreasonable approach fostered by superstition, speculation and other forms of irrational thinking, woman came to be considered inferior, one distressing result of which was that she was deprived, among many other things, of the rights to inherit property. She was entitled to no share even in family property. How great an incapacitating factor this was may be judged from the neglect and degrading treatment which women had to suffer for centuries. It was not

until the advent of Islam, that, for the first time in the history of mankind, women were given their due legal rights over property. The famous historian, J.M. Roberts Writes:

Its coming was in many ways revolutionary. It kept women, for example, in an inferior position, but gave them legal rights over property not available to women in many European countries until the nineteenth century. Even the slave had rights and inside the community of the believers there were no castes nor inherited status. This revolution was rooted in a religion which – like that of the Jews – was not distinct from other sides of life, but embraced them all.⁵

The same point has been made about ancient India by a retired Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, Mr. Rajinder Sachar:

‘..... historically, Islam had been very liberal and progressive in granting property rights to women. It is a fact that there were no property rights given to Hindu women until 1956, when the Hindu Code Bill was passed, whereas Islam had granted these rights to Muslim women over 1400 years ago.’⁶

This is not, however, just a matter of anteriority. What is significant is that, in granting women equal status and their proper rights, Islam set up an important precedent which had as far-reaching an effect on the civilization of the times as western civilization has had on the world of today. If Islam was able to accomplish such a revolution in human affairs, it was because Islam did not remain just a philosophical creed but it had conquered most of the parts of the inhabited world of the times.

In the world of today, even those commentators who generously acknowledge the virtues of Islam, often repeat this phrase that Islam has conferred an inferior status upon women. But these two things that Islam gives woman a share in property and that Islam has degraded woman are contradictory. Because from ancient times till today, the question of inheritance has been the most important social issue. The issue of inheritance might well be considered the sole criterion of status in society. Contrary to the custom of the time, the entitling of woman to have a share in property is a clear proof that Islam had no desire to degrade woman. Had this been so, the first demonstration of this desire would have been reflected in her being deprived of her share in property, which would have been considered quite correct and justifiable according to the traditions of the times.

It is interesting to see the reverse side of the coin as presented by a recent convert to Islam, namely, the English pop singer, Cat Stevens, now known as Yousuf Islam. Asked by a Jewish woman how he intended to deal with the problem of Islam’s ‘degradation’ of women, he said that he had not actually made a study of women’s status in Islam, but that for his own part, he had, since his conversion, asked his mother to come and stay with him and that he loved looking after her. His relations with his wife had also considerably improved.

In its assessment of the status of women, the western mind has made the same error as ancient man: it has formed opinions based on irrational beliefs. This accounts for latter-day distortions of thought in the advanced western countries on the balance of power between the sexes, and for the resultant grave distortion in the concept of women.

Woman in Modern Civilization

Where modern western man fell deeply into error was in his blind acceptance of the concept of the equality of the sexes without giving due consideration to what equality – in its best sense – ought to mean, or to what in practice it entails. According to modern thinking, according equal status to women meant bringing them out of their homes and standing them face to face with men in all facets of life without any regard for the practical and moral problems which might ensue. Islam, on the other hand, defines separate roles, and, therefore, separate spheres of work for men and women, since it is natural and realistic to do so. The other great error made by modern western thinkers was to assume that a role which was separate and different, and played out in other than traditionally masculine strongholds, was necessarily of trifling importance – in short, inferior. As such the west concluded (because of separate role) that Islam gives an inferior position to women. On the contrary, since it is being said (in theory) that women must be given place in every department of men, so they conclude that the west gives her superior position. So modern man imagines that his feminine counterpart has in actuality been accorded a superior position. But let us examine what, in fact, is the state of women's affairs. In the societies of the west, which have attained a high level of material development, theory has not been put into practice, and men and women still live and work in their own very separate domains. The status of women is only marginally better than it was in ancient times, there still being mutually exclusive divisions into male and female spheres, with the corresponding attitude still very much in evidence. If this were not so, what need would there be for 'women's lib'?

Fourteen hundred years ago, Islam launched a much-needed 'women's lib' movement, whose purpose was to free women from artificial curbs, and to give them the position which any normal human being should have in society. (One instance, for example is to give them share in family property). This movement increased their status without any sacrifice of femininity or traditional values and without creating any perversion in society.

The fact that Islam launched its movement under the guidance of revelation, its exponents were in no doubt as to what limits should be set to societal change. The west, however, in its preoccupation with modernity, plunged headlong into experimentation with the old order of values, sweeping away traditional moral precepts and 'restrictive' conventions. All of this was done under the banners of 'reason', 'empiricism', 'logic' 'liberalism' and so on, but, in actual fact, the whole 'liberation' movement has been so swamped in a welter of emotion that what is supposed to be acceptable in terms of normal human standards is once again becoming obscured, and the problems created in society by morally rudderless individuals are becoming legion.

Unnatural Equality

Selected readings from the Quran were prepared in English by the English orientalist, Edward William Lane and were first published in London in book form in 1843. In his foreword, Lane wrote that “the fatal point in Islam was the degradation of woman.” Since then this remark has been regularly taken up as a stick with which to beat Islam. In fact, whenever Islamic affairs were mentioned, it became such a common observation, that not only the enemies of Islam, but also relatively just writers such as the historian, J .M. Roberts, who did justice to Islam in pointing out its virtues, mentioned it as if it were an established fact.

We have shown in detail, at another point in this book, that this allegation is entirely baseless. The facts are quite the reverse. Islam has, in actual fact, raised the status of woman. If the truth were told, woman’s degradation has come about at the hands of two major civilization, one ancient and polytheistic, the other modern and atheistic. The former has been culpable both in theory and in practice, while the latter has been so in practice, despite its theorizing to the contrary.

We must never lose sight of the fact that what governed the ethics and lifestyles of ancient polytheistic civilization were myths. Certain highly fanciful, but obviously baseless suppositions were believed in as truths, and all aspects of human existence were subordinated to them. For instance, ancient man regarded certain natural phenomena, such as the sun and the moon, with the awe of ignorance and venerated them as deities. Conversely, he supposed certain other phenomena to be inferior, therefore, undeserving of respect. It was into the latter category that women fell, possibly because menstruation and their inability to fight alongside their menfolk were interpreted in an adversely superstitious manner. Woman was regarded as the inferior sex and, therefore, deserving of degrading treatment by men.

Modern western civilization has hardly produced a better result in ostensibly exalting the status of women. It may have pronounced men and women equal in every respect and decreed that all work that can be done by a man can be done by a woman too, it may have encouraged women to come out of their homes and try to find a position equal to a man’s in every department of life (hence the slogan, Don’t make coffee, make policy.); but, in practice, this concept of equality has done more to degrade her than any traditional view could have done.

The next chapter deals with this topic in detail.

What is the reason then for this state of affairs? The reason, to put it briefly, is the erroneous concept of sexual equality held in western countries. Even the equality that allegedly exists between men, which we tend to take for granted, needs careful examination. Let us suppose that equality truly exists between one man and another. We should then be able to take an Einstein, put him in the boxing ring with the world heavy weight champion, and expect him to last out at least for several rounds. We should also expect the boxer to be able to hold his own while presiding over international scientific conferences. This may seem laughable, but that is what absolute equality would mean. Obviously, there are degrees of equality and

different varieties of equality, just as there are degrees and kinds of excellence. When we want an accurate picture of equality, we have to think in terms of status and not in terms of the workplace. Equality does not mean that the president should be interchangeable with the dustman. It means rather that every man should be looked upon with same respect and should be able to expect the same treatment, legally and morally.

The error into which the west has so lamentably fallen is its attempt to establish an unnatural equality of the workplace for men and women. The result is as might have been expected: the greatest *inequality* in human history has developed between men and women. If men and women are of two different sexes, it is because they were created to serve separate purposes. Place them then in their respective fields and they will be equally successful, although in different ways. But, place them in the same field, and neither the men nor the women will be able to make the best use of their respective creative faculties and general abilities. In such a situation, it is the women who will inevitably find themselves forced into inferior positions.

Inspired by false notions of equality, many girls have left home only to find that the independent life they hoped for had to be gained at the expense of their intrinsic femininity and a consequent loss of values. In extreme cases they found that the only way to survive was to become the play-things of men. In which case it was they themselves, led on by an erroneous belief, who brought about their own degradation. Where restraints would have saved them, liberty ruined them.

Women's emancipation has led to a whole new set of social problems, the most persistent, and most deleterious in effect being that of pornography, which must be seen as one of the more baneful results of freedom having given way to license.

Pornography may be defined as the obscene representation of erotic behaviour in books, pictures, films, etc., with the intention of causing sexual excitement. "Pornographic matter has fallen under legislative prohibition in most countries in the world on at least one of the following assumptions:

Pornography will tend to deprave or corrupt the morals of youth, or of adults and youth;

Consumption of such matter is a cause of sexual crimes."⁷

The demand for pornography has become so great that, in western countries, it has developed into a regular industry. In America itself this industry has an annual turnover of 8 billion dollars. The problems created by it were of such magnitude that an eleven-member U.S. commission headed by the Attorney General, Mr. Edwin Meese, had to be set up to look into them. Its final report stated that available evidence strongly supports the hypothesis that substantial exposure to most pornography "bears some causal relationship to the level of sexual violence, sexual coercion or unwanted sexual aggression."

The commission also concluded that there were ties between the pornography industry and organized crime. "There seems strong evidence that significant portions of the pornography magazine industry, the

keep-show industry and the pornography film industry are either directly operated or closely controlled by La Cosa Nostra members or very close associates.”

The introduction to the final report urges not only action against the pornography industry, but more severe penalties for violation of obscenity laws. Mr. Edwin Meese, in fact, has called for a law enforcement of unprecedented scope against this industry. It is significant of the changes in modern attitude that this commission’s conclusions, which were reached “unanimously and confidently” conflict with those of a 1970 presidential commission that found no link between pornography and violence or other anti-social behaviour. Even more significant is the statement made by the commission that most pornography in the United States would be classified as “degrading, particularly to women.”

The Consequences of Unrestricted Freedom

Women’s emergence from their homes, the free mixing of the sexes, and the pervasiveness of pornography add up to a situation in which sexual excitement is inevitable. The institution of marriage having proved inadequate for the satisfaction of such artificially stimulated and now unbounded sexual urges, free sexual relations have gradually become the order of the day, and in the modern west, there seems to be no limit to the occasions on which sexual liberties may be indulged in. By representing free relations between men and women being as harmless as shaking hands with one’s friend, books, films, plays, etc., have played a major role in encouraging the acceptance of such behaviour as the norm.

The marriage bond, as a result, has come to be viewed as burden-some, superfluous and outdated. So many young men and women have started to live together without being married that the term “unmarried couple” has now come to be considered just as lawful a term as “married couple.”

Where the divine Shariah has established a balance between men and women such as renders them complements to each other, women’s lib claims that they are duplicates of each other – almost like clones. This ill judged concept has become tremendously popular in recent years, upsetting the balance, which had existed for hundreds of years between men and women. The results, however, have been no gain to humanity, and so many have been harmed by it, psychologically and otherwise, that it is difficult to see why there is not an immediate return to the status quo ante.

The first and most obvious result of women’s new-found economic independence has been the higher incidence of divorce. Scientific research has proved that women are more emotional than men, and, as such, can take hasty, ill-considered decisions. Before the industrial revolution having no permanent, independent economic footing acted as a check to their emotionalism. When, for example, they felt aggrieved at what they considered the negative aspects of married life, the question of how and where they would live if they opted for divorce inevitably acted as a deterrent. But such fears have been swept away in modern times. On this point the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says:

Industrialization has made it easier for women to support themselves, whether they are single, married, divorcees, or widowed. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Great Depression of the 1930s stopped the rise in the number of divorces in the United States for a time.⁸

In some countries the divorce rate is as high as the marriage rate. Modern times have seen women coming out of their homes to enter every department of life. But they have not in actual fact benefited by theoretically being accorded equal status with men. Indeed, many insoluble problems have ensued, one of them being illicit sexual relationships, for the free mixing of men and women can seldom culminate in any other way.

A sexual relationship which is formed outside the fold of marriage seems initially to be a simple matter, but when a child is born in such a situation, it becomes evident – generally too late – that it is not such a simple matter, and that that normally welcome event – the birth of a child – can have the gravest of consequences both for the child and the parents. It is a sad fact that large numbers of illegitimate children are born in the west, despite contraceptive devices being in general use. An official report in 1985 revealed that nearly one in five children born in Britain was illegitimate and that nearly one in three had been conceived by unmarried parents. Such illegitimate children frequently begun their lives in ignorance of who their fathers and mothers are. They are looked after in official institutions and then enter society more in the manner of animals than of human beings.

In western countries, where the marriage bond has weakened to a very great extent, and even quite trifling differences can result in separation, divorce has become common, and the resultant broken homes have had the same disastrous effects on children as illegitimacy. It is little wonder that children, who are deprived of the normal tender loving care of a united family, degenerate into animal-like creatures and frequently develop criminal tendencies. One glaring example is Charles Sobhraj, the internationally notorious criminal. Sobhraj's Indian father and European mother did marry, but separated soon after his birth so that he never knew what it was to live in a united home. He was brought up independently without receiving any proper education, and it is not, therefore, surprising that he gradually developed criminal tendencies. After a life of the most horrifying crime, he is now serving out a lengthy sentence in an Indian jail.

The baffling subject of juvenile delinquency has been studied exhaustively—a number of conclusions having been arrived at as to the cause. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*⁹ presents an analysis which depicts the child delinquent as a nervous, negative creature suffering from psychological abnormalities, which can be traced to their having been deprived of their parents, and which sooner or later manifest themselves in criminal activity. In one report of the *Time* it is revealed that in America each year about 300 children either kill their father or mother.¹⁰

Should not this give pause to the headlong rush into women's emancipation and all the social instability which ensues.

Notes:

1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1984, vol. 19, p. 909.
2. Bertrand Russell, *The Impact of Science on Society*, 1976, p. 17.
3. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1984, vol. 19, p. 909.
4. Corinthians, 11:9.
5. J.M. Roberts, *The Pelican History of the World*, New York, 1984, p. 334.
6. *The Statesman*, New Delhi, April 26, 1986.
7. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1984, vol. 8, p. 127.
8. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 163.
9. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 273.
10. *Time*, October 19, 1987, p. 60.

Of all actions, the most sublime is remembrance of God.

Abu Darda reports the Prophet as asking his companions: "Should I not tell you of the action that is best and most pure in the presence of your Lord; the action which will raise you up in the sight of God, and is better for you than great expenditure of gold and silver; better too than that you should meet your enemies in battle, striking their necks and they striking yours?" "Do tell us," the Companions replied, "It is remembrance of God," said the Prophet.

(Tirmidhi)

‘Difficult’ does not Mean ‘Impossible’

Right throughout human history, the individuals who have achieved the greatest successes have been those whose potential, initially dormant, was aroused by the pressures exerted by the environment and the challenges thrown down by adversity.

When sugarcane is passed through the traditional type of crusher, about 25% of the sugarcane juice is left unextracted. This is because the pressure is inadequate and also because the sugarcane is passed through the crusher only once. Electric crushers, however, exert comparatively greater pressure and the sugarcane is passed through their rollers twice. Even then, 15% of the juice remains to be squeezed out. In large-scale mills, the pressure is even greater and the sugarcane is passed through the roller four times. This extracts almost all of the juice.

Exerting pressure is productive in other fields as well. For example, the enormous potential with which God has endowed His creatures would never come to the fore if human beings were not put under pressure by the circumstances of their lives. It is only under the severest of pressure that man's true potential will blossom. Sometimes a man's personality has almost to be crushed (like the sugarcane) before he will give of his best.

Right throughout human history, the individuals who have achieved the greatest successes have been those whose potential, initially dormant, was aroused by the pressures exerted by the environment and the challenges thrown down by adversity.

These were the people, who had learnt the divine secret of ease in the midst of difficulty, who had stepped into the field of life with the courage to plant the seeds of ease in the soil of difficulty, and to reap as they had sown.

Human vision tends to regard difficulty as an insuperable problem. It is only divine vision which can discern in it the element of ease.

The Final Future

Each and everyone of us is going – broadly speaking – to meet the same fate as that of Mr. Bahuguna. Everyone living out that grand “45 year life-span” will find it coming abruptly to an end. Nothing will remain ahead but the gates of death and, beyond that, God’s court of divine judgement.

Mr. Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna, the well-known Indian political leader, breathed his last on March 17, 1989, at the age of seventy in a hospital in Cleaveland, U.S.A., where he had been under treatment. Mr. Bahuguna had achieved great political fame during the earlier part of his career, but in the last period of his life, his days were spent in comparative loneliness. The *Times of India* (March 18, 1989) writes: “One by one his friends left him, his political allies deserted him and, at the end of a political career spanning 45 years, he found himself in a near wilderness.”

Each and every one of us is going – broadly speaking – to meet the same fate as that of Mr. Bahuguna. Everyone living out that grand “45 year life-span” will find it coming abruptly to an end. Nothing will remain ahead but the gates of death and, beyond that, God’s court of divine judgement.

Everyone is granted his “45 years” in this world. But this period is not, as so many people seem to think, intended solely for the building of a brilliant political career. This period is granted to man only so that he may prepare himself for the life to come. Those who recognize this “45 years” as a preliminary stage of preparation and avail of it to the best advantage, will have every success in the permanent life of the hereafter. Conversely, those who regard this “45 years” as all in all will be in the position of those who expect a crop before they have planted the seeds. Nothing but eternal failure awaits such people in the world to come.

How brilliant man’s earthly career, but how lackluster his final future.

Sleep – Nature’s Blessing

In modern times, amongst the many subjects which have undergone careful scientific investigation, sleep has begun to figure quite prominently as a matter of hitherto unsuspected importance. America even has its ‘Association of Professional Sleep Societies,’ (New York) which publishes a learned journal simply entitled ‘Sleep.’

An American expert on sleep, Dr. James A. Horne, published a brief version of his finding in the *New York Times*, which was reproduced on the 24th of January, 1989, by the *Times of India* under the heading, ‘Sleep – if you want to be creative.’ This new collection of data seemed to support the view that one primary function of sleep was to “repair the cerebral cortex from the wear and tear of consciousness.”

It is a common experience for a man who has worked hard all day to feel tired by the evening. The day’s activities create tension in his mind, and he often goes to bed feeling dispirited. But, after just a few hours of sleep, he awakens up to find himself fresh and energetic once again. Once again he finds himself able to face up fully to the trials of everyday life. It is as if he had become a new man.

A man gains this new life through the natural phenomenon of sleep. It renovates his mind, calms his emotions and sets him up for the day ahead of him. Sleep is something we tend to take for granted, but were this system ever to be thrown out of gear, the whole human machine would grind to a halt.

Among His Signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Adore not the sun and the moon but adore God, who created them, if it is Him you wish to serve.”

(Quran)

An Identical Fate

The suicides of Marx's daughter and her husband, and Lenin's final death wish bespeak the sad truth of human existence. They underline the reality of life: that in this world, wealth and poverty, power and its absence are all irrelevant to God's will. The wealthy, powerful individual must, in the last analysis, face the same problem of helplessness, which besets the poorest of men. In the eyes of God, there is absolutely no difference between them.

Karl Marx's daughter, Laura, and his son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, committed suicide together in 1911. The sole reason for this extreme step was poverty. 'Laura's father could not come to their assistance because – great socialist thinker that he was – he had used up all his wealth in propagating his ideas. Sick of financial hardship, Paul and Laura put an end to their lives.

After Karl Marx's death, his socialist ideology began to spread throughout Russia, eventually setting in motion the socialist revolution. The first prime minister of the first socialist state was Vladimir Lenin. The most powerful ruler of his time, he wielded absolute power over his vast country. But there came a time when, for a long period, prior to his death on January 21, 1924, he was a victim of paralysis. He could neither walk nor speak properly and was confined to his room. Ultimately, in sheer desperation, he wrote to Joseph Stalin to provide him with potassium cyanide (a deadly poison that kills instantly) so that he could put an end to his life. The correspondence between Stalin and Lenin which testifies to how sick Lenin had become of life was discovered among the personal possessions of the well-known novelist, Alexander Bele. (*Times of India*, April 23, 1989, p. 16).

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